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The Role of Rhetoric in Legitimizing Authority: The Speeches of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah During the 2006 War

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The Role of Rhetoric in Legitimizing Authority: The Speeches of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah During the 2006 War

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Abstract

The Role of Rhetoric in Legitimizing Authority: The Speeches of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah During the 2006 War

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In 2006, Hizbullah operatives captured two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border attack, prompting a 34-day war in which neither Israel nor Hizbullah emerged victorious. Yet despite Hizbullah's instigation of the war, Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of Hizbullah, largely retained both his popular appeal and his legitimacy during and after the conflict.

Noting this paradox, I examine how Nasrallah maintained his legitimacy, defined as having an accepted claim to authority, throughout and after the war. To do so, I perform content analysis on the seven major speeches that Nasrallah delivered during the war in order to answer the following question: How did Nasrallah utilize rhetoric to maintain his legitimacy as Hizbullah's leader throughout the 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah? I then draw upon these observations to discuss my subsidiary research question: How does having a better understanding of political rhetoric, particularly in terms of Hizbullah, affect U.S. policies towards the Middle East, and specifically in Lebanon?

I argue that Nasrallah framed his message in these speeches using three particular themes: the "us versus them" narrative; the fulfillment of a divinely inspired mission, also known as the *NasR ilaahi*, or the divine triumph theme; and Hizbullah's role as the protector of the Lebanese and the Palestinians. In tandem with Hizbullah's self-identification as a resistance movement, I show that Nasrallah continuously qualified Hizbullah's mission as defensive. I also demonstrate that Nasrallah chose his words to foster a sense of community and common purpose. Additionally, I note that he often appealed to values widely held through the Arab world, including the sense of *karaama*, or dignity, and *taDaamun*, or solidarity, in his remarks.

To answer the second question, I review current U.S. policies towards Lebanon and note the ways in which these policies may not resonate with the Lebanese population. I argue that current U.S. policies, which focus on supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Internal Security Forces, developing stronger civil society, and promoting democratization, do not counter Hizbullah's power partly because U.S. public diplomacy initiatives do not take Nasrallah's rhetoric and legitimacy into account.

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INTRODUCTION

Legitimacy, which is defined as having an accepted claim to authority, is an integral component of an entity's ability to assert power over a particular group or set of groups. But how does one establish and maintain legitimacy? The answer to this question is multi-faceted.

Individuals have long realized the power of great orators. One need only remember the legacies of Demosthenes, Cicero, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Martin Luther King, Jr. to recognize the role that rhetoric may play in influencing a constituency and legitimizing authority, both positively and negatively. Recent scholarship supports this common view that rhetoric generates and supports legitimacy. Political scientist Bruce Gilley notes that "[l]egitimacy appears to be generated through reasonable and rational processes of communication and evaluation."[1] Similarly, Lisa Wedeen, while studying legitimacy and political outcomes in Syria, details how communication figures into legitimizing authority. She suggests that:

> …[the] 'ideational' group or the school of political culture, has suggested that rhetoric and symbols determine political outcomes. 'Discourse' in the ideational school is an independent variable. Such interpretations tend to suggest that 'successful' rhetoric and symbols produce 'legitimacy,' 'charisma,' or 'hegemony' for the regime, enabling political leaders to win support for themselves and their policies by fostering collective ethnic, national, or class identifications.[2]

From this premise, this paper focuses on the rhetoric of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of Hizbullah,[3] during the 2006 war between Hizbullah and Israel.

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[1] Bruce Gilley, "Interview with Bruce Gilley, Author of The Right to Rule: How States Win and Lose Legitimacy," Columbia University Press, accessed April 25, 2012, http://www.cup.columbia.edu/static/bruce-gilley-interview.

[2] Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 5.

[3] Hizbullah comes from the two Arabic words that mean "Party of God." Other common English transliterations of the phrase include Hezbollah, Hezballah, Hizballah, and Hizb'allah.

Neither Israel nor Hizbullah emerged victorious from this 34-day conflict. Israel engaged in a poorly planned but comprehensive air, ground, and naval campaign that devastated large parts of Lebanon. Nonetheless, the campaign failed to achieve its stated goals; namely, to recover the two kidnapped soldiers and eradicate Hizbullah. Hizbullah, which purported to initiate the conflict in order to liberate Lebanese prisoners from Israeli jails, and demonstrate support for the Palestinians following the Israeli raids in Gaza the preceding month, largely failed as well. Both sides experienced tremendous human and material costs. More than 1,100 Lebanese, 119 Israeli soldiers, and 40 Israeli civilians were killed as a result of the conflict.[4] Approximately 700 Hizbullah operatives died.[5] Nearly 4,400 Israelis and Lebanese were injured.[6] The economic toll in Lebanon topped $15 billion.[7] Israel incurred nearly $6 billion in damages.[8]

After the war, approval ratings for Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert dropped to 3%. The 2008 Winograd Report, which assessed the mistakes made by Israeli leadership in the war, excoriated both Olmert and Defense Minister Ehud Barak for their poor decision-making and tactical choices throughout the conflict.[9] Sixty-three percent of Israelis called for Olmert's resignation; polls indicated that 74% of Israelis wanted Barak to resign.[10] In contrast, Nasrallah largely escaped public condemnation and maintained his legitimacy, despite admitting that Hizbullah had made a grave tactical error by

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[4] Human Rights Watch, *Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon During the 2006 War* (New York: Human Rights Watch, September 2007), 4.

[5] Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Operations in Israel's War Against Hezbollah: Learning from Lebanon and Getting it Right in Gaza* (Santa Monica: Rand, 2011), xix.

[6] Human Rights Watch, 4.

[7] John K. Cooley, "Rebuilding Lebanon Is a Moral Imperative - And a Wise Strategy," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 5, 2006, http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0905/p09s01-coop.html.

[8] "The War in Figures," *Yadi'ot Ahronot*, August 15, 2006 in Joseph Alagha, "The Israeli-Hizbullah 34-Day War: Causes and Consequences," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 3.

[9] For a summary of the Commission's report (in English), see: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/30/world/middleeast/31winograd-web.html?pagewanted=all
For the full report (in Hebrew), see: http://www.vaadatwino.co.il/pdf/דוח%20סופי.pdf.

[10] "Israelis Call on Olmert to Resign," *Trumpet.com*, August 30, 2006, http://www.thetrumpet.com/?q=2786.1321.0.0&preview.

committing the abductions and provoking the attack on the Israelis.[11] Similarly, Hizbullah suffered no major damage to its popularity as a result of the war. During the 2009 elections, Hizbullah performed better than it ever had previously.[12]

Noting this paradox, this paper examines the seven major speeches that Nasrallah delivered the 2006 war in order to understand better how Nasrallah employed rhetoric throughout the crisis. Through these speeches, I attempt to answer the following question: How did Hassan Nasrallah utilize rhetoric to maintain his legitimacy as Hizbullah's leader throughout the 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah? I then draw upon these observations to discuss my subsidiary research question: How does having a better understanding of political rhetoric, particularly in terms of Hizbullah, affect U.S. policies towards the Middle East, and specifically in Lebanon?

METHODOLOGY & FINDINGS

In order to examine how Nasrallah employed rhetoric to legitimize his authority, I performed content analysis on the seven speeches that he delivered during the 2006 war. Each of these speeches was broadcast on Hizbullah's channel, al-Manar. I argue that Nasrallah framed his message in these speeches using three particular themes: the "us versus them" narrative; the fulfillment of a divinely inspired mission, also known as the *NasR ilaahi*, or the divine triumph theme;[13] and Hizbullah's role as the protector of the Lebanese and the Palestinians.

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[11] In an interview giving on al-Manar on August 26, 2006, Nasrallah stated that Hizbullah leadership expected that Israel's response would be limited. According to Nasrallah, "We did not think that the capture would lead to a war at this time and of this magnitude. You ask me if I had known on July 11…that an operation would lead to such a war, would I do it? I say no, absolutely not." For more information, see: "Nasrallah: We Wouldn't Have Snatched Soldiers if We Thought it Would Spark War," *Haaretz*, August 27, 2006, http://www.haaretz.com/news/nasrallah-we-wouldn-t-have-snatched-soldiers-if-we-thought-it-would-spark-war-1.199556.

[12] In 2009, Hizbullah won ten seats and two cabinet posts. It is also part of the ruling March 8 coalition, which controls 18 of the 30 total cabinet posts. When Hizbullah first participated in elections in 1992, it won eight seats and refused to accept any cabinet posts.

[13] The literal translation of this phrase is "the victory of God."

I also demonstrate that Nasrallah chose the words that he used for these addresses to foster a sense of community and common purpose. For example, despite Hizbullah's Shi'ite origins and Lebanon's divided society, Nasrallah generally avoided using either religious or ethnic sectarian terminology. Instead, his remarks were largely inclusive and appealed to a wide swath of supporters; he structured his religious comments to appeal to both the Muslim and the Christian communities. Additionally, he often appealed to values widely held through the Arab world, including the sense of *karaama*, or dignity, and *taDaamun*, or solidarity, in his remarks.

In tandem with Hizbullah's self-identification as a resistance movement, Nasrallah continuously qualified Hizbullah's mission as defensive.[14] By doing so, Nasrallah had the ability to accomplish two goals: to justify Hizbullah's continued defense alongside the Lebanese Armed Forces and to refuse to disarm per Security Council Resolution 1701,[15] which ended the war. He also tended to use language largely reserved for the nation-state, particularly when he spoke about protecting the nation and providing for the Lebanese after the war.

To answer the second question, I review current U.S. policies towards Lebanon and note the ways in which these policies may not resonate with the Lebanese population. I observe that current U.S. policies, which focus on supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Internal Security Forces, developing stronger civil society, and promoting democratization, do not counter Hizbullah's power partly because U.S. public diplomacy initiatives do not take Nasrallah's rhetoric and legitimacy into account.

I do not propose that Nasrallah's compelling use of rhetoric fully explains his appeal. To do so would ignore other salient variables, notably Hizbullah's extensive network of social services and instances in which the group has employed violence and

[14] Hizbullah often refers to itself as *al-moqawama al-Islamiyya*, or the Islamic resistance.
[15] For the full text of Security Council Resolution 1701, see: www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8808.doc.htm

coercion in order to achieve its goals. Yet Nasrallah's fame throughout the Middle East as a compelling orator belies the importance of rhetoric and the value that he places on it himself. His popularity and celebrity extend far beyond Hizbullah's Shi'ite base. Instead, Nasrallah draws on four main constituencies and targets each in his statements: Lebanese Shi'ites; the general Lebanese population; the Palestinians; and the greater Arab population. Most importantly, he is the public face of Hizbullah. What he says, and how he says it, matter.

THE ROLE OF RHETORIC IN ARAB CULTURE

Historically, rhetoric and oratory have figured prominently into Arab culture. The earliest Arabic literary traditions, known as *jahiliyya* poetry, are based on an oral tradition. Similarly, the Qur'an was originally meant to be transmitted orally; the term *qur'an* itself means recitation. Although scribes of the Prophet Mohammad eventually wrote down the verses that he revealed, the practice of Qur'anic recitation continues throughout the Muslim world. Presently, there are ten different versions of Qur'anic recitation. Those with the ability to recite are widely respected.

Throughout Nasrallah's tenure as Hizbullah's secretary-general, he has demonstrated a deep understanding of the relationship between rhetoric and legitimacy. Despite having a slight speech impediment, Nasrallah has developed a reputation for being a skilled and commanding orator. He is considered one of the greatest speakers of his generation of Arab leaders, with a voice unheard since the passing of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. He delivers most of his long addresses in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), although he will occasionally use words and phrases from the Levantine dialect.[16] By primarily speaking in MSA, Nasrallah is able to demonstrate his command of the language. Speaking for long stretches in MSA requires significant

[16] Arabic is considered a diglossic language because it exists in two forms: the standardized form (Modern Standard Arabic) and the vernacular form (Arabic dialects). Modern Standard Arabic is primarily used for literature, spoken media, and written media, while the dialects are generally used in day-to-day functions (although mixing of the two forms is common, particularly among educated speakers).

education and training; those who have the capabilities to do so are widely respected. Thus, Nasrallah's ability to deliver a speech in MSA commands respect and contributes to his authority.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

The present section concludes with a brief review of the literature on legitimacy. The second chapter provides a short history of Lebanese politics, the origins and growth of Hizbullah, the group's organizational structure, and its social welfare and media outreach initiatives. The second chapter also includes a brief biography of Nasrallah.

The third chapter begins with a synopsis of the 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah. I then proceed to analyze the seven speeches Nasrallah gave during the war, noting the shared trends and communication styles. This analysis focuses on the three frames within which Nasrallah focused his narrative (the "us versus them" narrative, the divinely inspired mission, and the true protector of the Lebanese and Palestinians). I also demonstrate that Nasrallah employs language traditionally reserved for the nation-state to inflate Hizbullah's role and analyze the specificity with which Nasrallah chooses his words.

In the fourth chapter, I discuss how having a better understanding of political rhetoric, particularly in terms of Hizbullah, affects U.S. policies towards the Middle East, and specifically in Lebanon. To do so, I comment on Hizbullah's present role in regional politics, particularly as it relates to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. I review the current challenges that Hizbullah is facing, particularly following the unrest of the Arab Spring. I then detail the ways in which understanding Nasrallah's communication patterns may affect and detract from U.S. policy initiatives in the Middle East. I conclude with thoughts on possibilities for Nasrallah's future leadership.

LITERATURE REVIEW

At its most basic, legitimacy can be defined as having consent to the right to govern.[17] Legitimate entities possess an accepted claim to authority. However, the concept of legitimacy resists exacting, quantifiable analysis.[18] Samuel Huntington admitted as much when he referred to legitimacy as a "mushy" concept.[19] Yet despite its amorphous nature, legitimacy continues to be a telling variable in social science research, wherein most researchers agree that belief and opinion play an integral role in its definition.[20]

Max Weber posits that legitimacy derives from three possible sources: tradition, charisma, and legality.[21] According to Weber, legitimacy is essential both for security and good governance.[22] While his argument presumes that the government of a nation-state is the primary vessel for legitimacy, nothing in his discussion precludes a sub-national group, supra-national group, or non-state actor, such as Hizbullah, from engaging with similar sources to obtain legitimacy.[23]

Drawing on Weber, Seymour Martin Lipset suggests that legitimacy is predicated on institutions. He notes that legitimacy is "the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for

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[17] Jean-Marc Coicaud, *Legitimacy and Politics: A Contribution to the Study of Political Right and Political Responsibility*, trans. David Ames Curtis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 10.

[18] Ted Gurr suggests that the following terms are synonymous with legitimacy: "political community;" "political myth;" "support;" "authoritativeness;" and "system affect." Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 183-185 in Michael C. Hudson, "The Legitimacy Problem in Arab Politics," in *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 1-2.

[19] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 46 in Wedeen, 7.

[20] Wedeen, 7.

[21] H.M. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds. *From Max Weber* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 77-79 in Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 6.

[22] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. Talcott Parsons, trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 124-126; Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber* (New York: Doublesday, 1960), 294-295 in Michael C. Hudson, "The Legitimacy Problem in Arab Politics," in *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 1.

[23] However, it should be noted that Weber claims that the state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.

the society."[24] Lipset's inclusion of institutions is understandable; presumably, institutions function at their highest when a society buys into their value. By using this definition, the nature of Hizbullah's relationship with the Lebanese political institutions may be symbiotic; Hizbullah both lends legitimacy to and derives legitimacy from a system in which it interacts with the institutions.

Membership itself may be the key to legitimacy. As David Easton notes, "the most stable support will derive from the conviction on the part of the member that it is right and proper for him to accept and obey the authorities and to abide by the requirements of the regime."[25] Simply by buying into and supporting a particular authority, members are conferring legitimacy upon said authority.

Rustow's definition also underscores the significance of membership in conferring legitimacy, stating that "the legitimate order requires a distinct sense of corporate selfhood: the people within a territory must feel a sense of political community which does not conflict with other subnational or supranational communal identifications." While Rustow's definition is compelling, it does not allow for those who subscribe to identities other than that of the nation-state, and thus fails to explain the source from which Hizbullah derives its legitimacy. While Hizbullah recognizes its Lebanese character, as evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of those fighting for Hizbullah are Lebanese,[26] its appeal goes far beyond its national identification. The group appeals to the Shi'ite community both within and outside of Lebanon, to the Palestinians, to many in the wider Lebanese community, and to the broader Arab population.

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[24] Lipset in Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 9.
[25] David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: Wiley, 1965), 302-302 in Michael C. Hudson, "The Legitimacy Problem in Arab Politics," in *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 18.
[26] Mehdi Mozaffari, "What is Islamism? History and Definition of a Concept," in *Islamic Political Thought and Governance*, ed. Abdullah Saeed, vol. IV of *Critical Concepts in Political Science* (London: Routledge, 2011), 294.

Other scholars suggest that charisma and personality drive legitimacy, a point which I will largely explore throughout this paper. According to David Easton, "A strong personal leader may generate legitimacy for a regime or an entire system. The regime or opposition movement that succeeds in identifying itself with a highly salient ideological problem may win positive support." The value of this statement lies not only in its recognition of how personality may shape legitimacy, but the way in which personality and ideology interact to strengthen support.

In his seminal book, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy*, Michael Hudson explores the meaning of legitimacy within the framework of Arab politics. While it is important to note that the book's publication (1979) occurred at a time a geopolitical upheaval and pre-dates Hizbullah's inception, Hudson presents ideas that remain applicable both to current Arab politics and Hizbullah in particular. Hudson suggests that within the Arab world two factors in particular determine an entity's legitimacy: the ability to assert influence, which he defines as threat, coercion, promise and reward, and a group or government's recognition of what he refers to as "all-Arab core concerns." Hudson identifies the plight of the Palestinians as foremost among these concerns.

Similar to Easton, Hudson assigns value to the role of personality in defining legitimacy, noting that personality-driven leadership is "a formidable legitimacy resource partly because of the absence of countervailing structures and partly because the leaders have been able to embody in themselves some of the diffuse legitimizing values arising out of political culture."[27] He further observes that, from a historical and cultural vantage point, political systems within the Arab world have often been heavily dependent on personality-driven leadership; the history of poorly functioning institutions within Arab political systems has reinforced the role of personality-driven leadership, as typified by Gamal abd al-Nasser. As a caveat, Hudson is careful to note that the dearth of high

[27] Hudson, 20.

functioning institutions, as well as what he calls the "throes of ideological change," have required those in personal leadership roles to "carry more of the legitimacy burden than they can easily bear."[28]

Relatedly, Hudson notes the significance of ideology in legitimacy, arguing that, "[i]deology bulks large as a legitimate resource in Arab politics."[29] He draws on Palestinian thinker Hisham Sharabi to make this point, noting that Arab leaders more frequently invoke nationalist symbols in their speeches, including "Islam, Palestine, democracy, liberation, and social justice," in lieu of policy alternatives and discussions.[30] While one may question whether this is a trend specific to Arab politics, his underlying assertion remains salient.

Many of these theories on legitimacy apply to Hizbullah, and Nasrallah in particular. Yet the ways in which the group identifies and legitimizes itself also require examination. Because of Hizbullah's foundation as a Shi'ite Islamist group, it is necessary to examine legitimacy within the context of Islam.

Drawing heavily on Khomeinist ideology, Hizbullah bases its leadership and philosophy of obedience on the concept of *wilaayat al-faqih*, or guardianship of the jurist. In essence, Hizbullah "subscribes to the doctrine of clerical supremacy." As a result of this allegiance, Hizbullah's leaders have articulated their loyalty to both Ayatollah Khomeini and his successor, Ayatollah Khamenei, who, in turn, have the ability to venerate both Hizbullah's leadership and decisions.[31] In the case of Nasrallah, Ayatollah Khamenei has backed his leadership since 1992 and allowed Nasrallah to extend his term as Secretary-General despite the term limits imposed on the position. From this hierarchy, one may infer that Nasrallah, and others within Hizbullah, derive legitimacy from working within this Shi'ite framework.

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[28] Ibid, 19.
[29] Ibid, 20.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 33.

By examining these different frameworks for legitimacy, it is possible to understand the ways in which Hizbullah, and Nasrallah in particular, legitimize themselves to their various constituencies. Yet Hizbullah's status within Lebanon complicates the question of legitimacy. While the organization recognizes and participates in the Lebanese political system, Hizbullah is more influential, better financed, and better armed than the Lebanese government. The group has previously demonstrated its ability to cow the government into submission.[32] Thus, one must also ask whether Hizbullah's legitimacy is largely derived in comparison with other political actors within Lebanon and the Arab world. Most notably, Hizbullah has perpetuated the perception of having successfully resisting Israel; no other group can lay claim to this. Thus, it is possible that Hizbullah's legitimacy, and particularly Nasrallah's, is at least partially dependent on the failures of many other Arab political entities.

[32] For example, in May 2008, the Siniora government attempted to curtail Hizbullah's power by disabling its communications network in southern Lebanon. The government also attempted to remove the security chief of the Beirut airport, Wafik Shkeir, due to his alleged ties with Hizbullah. In response, Hizbullah took control of West Beirut through force, with Nasrallah declaring that the government's decision to shut down the communications network was tantamount to an act of war. The government eventually allowed Hizbullah to continue to operate its communications network and reinstate Shkeir.

Chapter 2: Hizbullah: The Party of God

INTRODUCTION

Hizbullah's appeal as both a political and military organization has steadily grown since the party's inception in 1982. Although the Shi'ite group began as the Islamist counterweight to the secular Shi'ite party Amal,[33] Hizbullah rapidly gained supporters among various constituencies, including the Lebanese Shi'ite community, large portions of the Lebanese population, the Palestinians, and the general Arab population. The perception that Hizbullah forced the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, widely held throughout the Middle East, caused the group's popularity to skyrocket.

This section provides a short history of Lebanese politics before delving into a discussion of the origins of Hizbullah, its organizational structure, and seminal periods in the party's evolution. It also provides an overview of the main players, with particular emphasis on the ascent of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah within the party, before concluding with a discussion of how the party espouses and practices leadership.

THE LEBANESE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Home to 18 different religious sects,[34] religious diversity is a hallmark of Lebanese society. As a result, sectarian trends figure prominently into the Lebanese political structure. The Lebanese political system, which is based around the country's confessional nature, codified and legitimized these divisions.

In 1943, when Lebanon gained its independence from France, the National Pact, or *al-mithaaq al-waTani*,[35] accorded political power and military positions based on

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[33] *Amal* is the Arabic word for hope. It is an acronym derived from the group's formal name "*Afwaaj al-Moqawama al-Lubnaniyya"*, or the Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance.

[34] Recognized sects include: Sunni, Shi'ite, Druze, 'Alawi, Assyrian, Copt, Syriac Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Chaldean, Maronite, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Aremenian Catholic, evangelical Christian, an amalgamation of small Christian sects, and Jews. For more information, see: Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 11.

[35] The National Pact is an unwritten understanding of the power-sharing dynamics in Lebanon.

religious sect. Based largely on a census done in 1932, in which the Maronite and Sunni communities comprised the largest segments of society, and the favored status of the Maronites under French rule, the pact dictates that only a Maronite may be president to the country and only a Sunni may hold the position of prime minister. As the third-largest sect in Lebanon, the pact prescribes that the speaker of the house must be a Shi'ite; however, this position carries far less political weight and prestige than either the presidency or the premiership.

The makeup of governmental bureaucracy reflected and reinforced this underrepresentation. In 1946, Maronites occupied 40% of the highest civil service posts; Sunnis occupied an additional 27%. In contrast, Shi'ites only comprised 3.2% of these posts.[36]

The *mithaaq al-waTani* remained in effect until 1989, when the Ta'if Accord formally ended the Lebanese civil war after 15 years of fighting. While the Ta'if Accord maintained the power-sharing bureaucratic structure, it stipulated that parliamentary seats be divided equally between Christians and Muslims. According to Lebanese scholar Nazih Richani, "[i]n a sense, the Ta'if Accord is merely an updated version of the 1943 National Pact; it made explicit what had been generally a norm with a slight change reflecting the new demographics of the Muslim population."[37] The provisions of the Ta'if Accord remain in effect.

THE LEBANESE SHI'ITE COMMUNITY

As a result of sectarian trends and dynamics, the Lebanese Shi'ite community has traditionally experienced political and economic disenfranchisement within Lebanon. Before the 1940s, more than 85% of Shi'ites lived in southern Lebanon and the Biqaa' Valley, both of which were largely underdeveloped and provided few economic

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36 Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004),12.

37 Nazih Richani, *Dilemmas of Democracy and Political Parties in Sectarian Societies: The Case of the Progressive Socialist Party of Lebanon 1949-1996* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 21.

opportunities. Most Shi'ites traditionally engaged in agricultural and industrial activities, whereas Maronites and Sunnis tended to be active in the commerce, finance, and real estate.[38] Moreover, Shi'ite vegetable and tobacco farmers were largely unable to support themselves. As a result, the Shi'ite community had few opportunities for socioeconomic advancement.

Israel's creation in 1948 compounded these economic woes. Following the U.N. declaration of Israeli statehood, Palestinians flooded many of the surrounding Arab countries; Jordan and Lebanon witnessed the largest influxes**.** The inflow of Palestinians placed additional stress on the already tenuous Lebanese economy. Shi'ites in particular felt the strain of having to compete for economic opportunities with the Palestinians.

As a result, many Shi'ites migrated from southern Lebanon and the Biqaa' Valley to Beirut in the 1950s and 1960s, searching for vocational opportunities. Simultaneously, the Shi'ite population grew rapidly. Estimates indicate that the Shi'ite population tripled between 1956 and 1975, from 250,000 to 750,000. Proportionally, the Shi'ites grew from 19% of the Lebanese population to 30%.[39] However, the confessional political system, which had not been designed to adjust for either rapid population growth or for shifting demographics, did not account for these changes. Their political disenfranchisement continued.

In the late 1950s, the Shi'ite community found a champion when Imam Musa al-Sadr. Al-Sadr, an Iranian émigré to Lebanon, noted the subservient position occupied by the Shi'ite community. In response, he established and organized *Harakat al-MaHruumiin,* or the Movement of the Deprived, in order to mobilize the Shi'ite community to push for political and socioeconomic gains. His movement gained traction among a large number of Shi'ite clerics, particularly those who attended the famous Shi'ite seminary in Najaf, Iraq. Charles Winslow notes that the movement "was not bent

[38] Hamzeh, 13.
[39] Ibid.

on the destruction of the Lebanese Republic but sought both to get more representation for the Shi'ite community in the country's political system and to receive more equitable treatment, economically and socially, from the landlords and moneyed elite who, it was claimed, kept the poorer Shi'ite classes in their desperate condition."[40]

THE CREATION OF HIZBULLAH

Amal, a secular Shi'ite political and military movement, evolved out of *Harakat al-MaHruumiin* in 1975. While often overshadowed by the Lebanese civil war, the group began attract notice and get political traction. Musa al-Sadr's disappearance in Libya in 1978 drew further attention to the group, facilitating its growth. The group quickly consolidated its power and became the de facto representative of the Shi'ite population.

While calls for Shi'ite enfranchisement had grown successively louder since the 1960s, the 1979 Iranian Revolution provided a rallying point for Shi'ites throughout the Middle East, and particularly in Lebanon, who desired to merge their political and religious agendas. Deputy Secretary General of Hizbullah, Naim Qassem, recalls that the "[t]hirst for an Islamic revolution came in tandem with a rising and insistent need for political revitalization in a country like Lebanon, and need that was not fulfilled by practical Islamic activity at the time of the Revolution."[41] Amal, though an effective representative, largely did not capitalize on the religious aspect of the Shi'ite identity.

Simultaneously, the constant influx of Palestinians into southern Lebanon, and in particular the presence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), continued to impact negatively the Shi'ite community. The PLO launched attacks against Israel from southern Lebanon, thus subjecting the Shi'ite community to the brunt of the retribution. Since both were fighting the Palestinians, the Israelis and the Shi'ites were natural allies in the late 1970s; some anecdotes indicate that the Shi'ites welcomed the Israelis with rosewater. However, when the Israelis invaded Lebanon in 1982 to counter the attacks by

[40] Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society* (London: Routledge, 1996), 197.
[41] Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, trans. Dalia Khalil (London: Saqi, 2005), 18.

PLO, they caught the Shi'ite community in the crossfire. This tactical error irreversibly damaged relations between the two and spurred Hizbullah's creation.

After the Israeli occupation, a Shi'ite cleric named Abbas Moussawi formed Hizbullah by breaking away from Amal with a core group of supporters who desired to create a party based on Islamic ideals. Although based on the tenets of the Islamic revolution in Iran, growing tensions in Amal and the Israeli invasion catalyzed the split. Between 1982 and 1992, Hizbullah largely functioned as a paramilitary organization, eschewing participation in the Lebanese political system. The group, whose name comes from the Qur'anic verse that states, "Verily the party of God shall be victorious,"[42] published its core mission in its 1985 Manifesto. Within the Manifesto, Hizbullah defined itself as a resistance movement, called on the Lebanese Maronites to convert to Islam, and excoriated the Zionist enemy. Over the years, Hizbullah has amended its initial call for conversion, but maintained its identity as a resistance movement and vanguard against the Zionists.

The 1992 elections, following the end of the Lebanese civil war, forced Hizbullah to consider if and how it wanted to participate in the Lebanese political system. Traditionally, the group had condemned the confessional nature of the Lebanese political system. Nasrallah, who became Secretary-General in 1992, decided that the group would participate in elections, but not hold any ministerial positions. In the two decades since, Hizbullah has increasingly recognized electoral success. The group has also reconsidered its position on participating in the Lebanese cabinet. Currently, the group holds two positions in the Lebanese cabinet.

In 2000, Israel made the unilateral decision to pull out of southern Lebanon, save the 25 square miles of the Sheba'a Farms region. While Israeli's decision was largely based on domestic political concerns, Hizbullah's continual attacks on Israel allowed the

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[42] Robin B. Wright, *Dreams and Shadows: The Future of the Middle East* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 173.

group to claim that it had done what no other Arab group had had the ability to do – it had defeated the Zionist entity and forced its withdrawal. As a result, Hizbullah's popularity throughout the Arab world skyrocketed, and Nasrallah's in particular.

ORGANIZATION AND PHILOSOPHY

Heavily influenced by Iran, Hizbullah's philosophy on legitimate leadership stems from the concept of *wilaayat al-faqih*, which guided the Iranian Revolution. Three core tenets direct Hizbullah's goals and missions: the aforementioned legitimate leadership; the role of Islam in creating and propagating more-fulfilling and sustaining lives; and resistance to the Israeli occupation.[43] Yet despite Iran's ideological and financial influence, as well as support from Syria, Hizbullah has traditionally maintained that it is a Lebanese organization. Some scholars point to the lack of foreign fighters in the organization as a hallmark of this identity.[44]

Hizbullah is highly structured, hierarchical organization that functions under the collective leadership of the group's *Majlis as-Shuura* (Consultative Council). The *Majlis as-Shuura* is made up of seven elected officials,[45] including the secretary-general. Although in theory the secretary-general is an elected office, direction from Iran can preempt these rules. As a result, despite the two-term limit on the position, Nasrallah has served five terms as Hizbullah's Secretary-General. As a result, Nasrallah has become "the central actor in almost all of Hizbullah's political and military decision making."[46]

The below figure illustrates Hizbullah's hierarchical nature, as well as the ways in which the organization is divided. The three noted regions (Beirut, Biq'a, and South Lebanon) demonstrate where the Lebanese Shi'ite communities are concentrated. The

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[43] Qassem, 19.
[44] Mehdi Mozaffari, "What is Islamism? History and Definition of a Concept," in *Islamic Political Thought and Governance*, ed. Abdullah Saeed, vol. IV of *Critical Concepts in Political Science* (London: Routledge, 2011), 294.
[45] Hizbullah's Central Council, *al-Majlis al-Markazi*, which is comprised of 200 party founders and cadres, elects the members of the Consultative Council through a three stage process. For more information, see: Hamzeh (2004), 45-48.
[46] Hamzeh (2004), 48.

chart also illustrates the extent to which Hizbulalh is involved in both political and military operations; for example, the Islamic Health Unit administers Hizbullah's hospitals, while the military and security apparatus mirrors the role of the army and the police force.

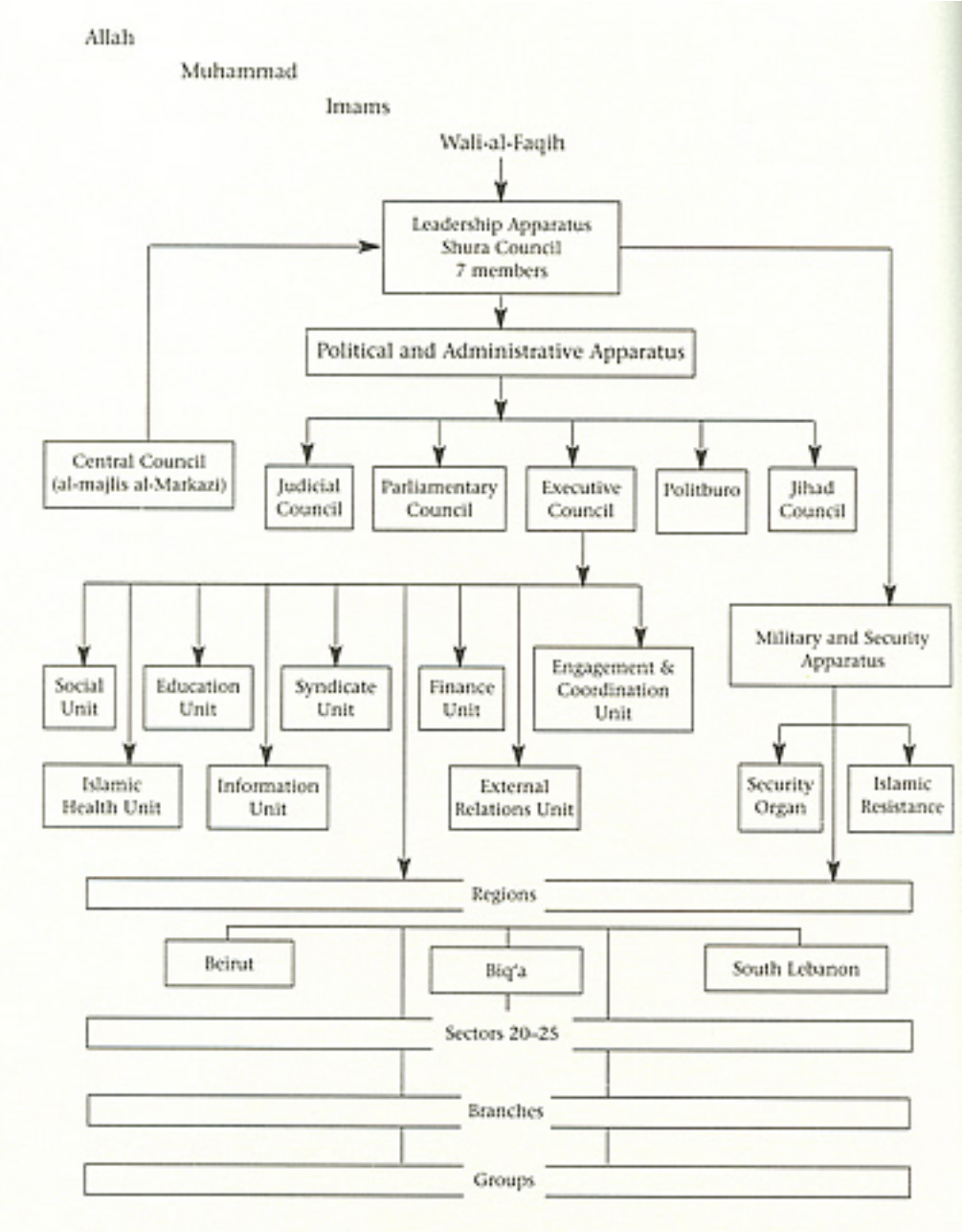

Figure 1: Hizbullah's organizational chart[47]

[47] Hamzeh (2004), 46.

Since 1992, the group has had both a political and military wing. As a result, Hizbullah remains the preeminent military force in southern Lebanon, but also participates regularly in the Lebanese political system. The organization has steadily increased its power through the electoral system. Some analysts note that "[t]he group continues to field candidates in national and municipal elections, and it has achieved modest, variable, yet steady degree of electoral success."[48]

SAYYID HASSAN NASRALLAH, HIZBULLAH'S SECRETARY-GENERAL

Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, was born into an impoverished Shi'ite family in Beirut in 1960, where he showed an interest in religion at an early age. With the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in in 1975, Nasrallah and his siblings returned to their ancestral family home in in southern Lebanon, where he completed his schooling.

After finishing his secondary education, Nasrallah joined the *Harakat al-MaHruumiin*. Nasrallah's involvement in the movement garnered attention and respect; from a young age, he was entrusted with significant organizational responsibilities. However, in 1976, under the guidance of mentors at his local mosque, Nasrallah left Lebanon and journeyed to Iraq to study at the famed Shi'ite seminary in Najaf. During this time, Nasrallah met Abbas Moussawi, the future founder of Hizbullah. Moussawi brought Nasrallah into his fold and began instructing him in his religious studies. Nasrallah has described Moussawi as a "friend, brother, mentor, and companion."[49]

In 1978, Iraqi politics forced Nasrallah to return to Lebanon; the ruling secular Ba'athist party had begun cracking down on and arresting Shi'ites, and particularly Lebanese Shi'ites in Najaf. Upon returning, Nasrallah continued working with Amal, where he was widely respected and headed the Biqaa' division of the party. However,

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[48] Casey L. Addis and Christopher M. Blanchard, *Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress*, R41446 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 3, 2011), 3.

[49] *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, ed. Nicholas Noe, trans. Ellen Khouri (London: Verso, 2007), 3.

when Moussawi broke off from Amal to form Hizbullah, Nasrallah and a number of his colleagues followed.

In 1992, after Moussawi was assassinated by Israel, Nasrallah assumed the position of secretary-general. Unlike his predecessor, Nasrallah subscribed to the importance of participating in the political system and adjusted Hizbullah's practices to accommodate this strategic vision. According to scholar Nizar Hamza, "Nasrallah considered political power in Lebanon to be no less important than placing the country under Sharia (Islamic) law…political power was on a par with military power."[50] Under his leadership, Hizbullah has realized significant electoral and political gains and entrenched itself in the domestic political arena.

Since he assumed the role of secretary-general, Nasrallah has been widely perceived as a charismatic and engaging leader. A powerful orator, he has the ability to command and maintain an audience. While he generally speaks in Modern Standard Arabic while giving formal addresses, thereby indicating his Arabic capabilities and education, he will occasionally utilize Levantine Arabic to connect with the audience. He is a serious speaker, though not somber; while he rarely makes jokes during his speeches, he turns to levity when appropriate. Perhaps most importantly, he is able to empathize and identify with his audiences. For example, when his son, Hadi, was killed by the Israelis in 1997, Nasrallah declared, "[w]e in the leadership of Hezbollah do not spare our children and save him for the future…[w]e pride ourselves when our sons reach the front line, and we stand heads held high when they fall as martyrs."[51] He is, according to journalist Robin Wright, "a man of God, gun, and government, a cross between Iranian revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini and Latin America's Che Guevara, a mix of charismatic Islamic populist and a wily guerilla tactician."[52]

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[50] Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 33.
[51] Wright, 181.
[52] Ibid, 159.

He has also notably and effectively manipulated media to Hizbullah's advantage; this was a large part of his strategy during the 2006 war. Israeli scholars Harel and Issacharoff observe that, "[Nasrallah] made use of the Lebanese media and Hezbollah communication channels in order to transmit sharp and clear messages regarding the [2006] war with Israel, the organization's identity, and its ties with Lebanon."[53]

Nasrallah's popularity extends throughout the Middle East. A poll conducted in Egypt, which is largely Sunni, asked individuals to name their two favorite political leaders. Nasrallah was the first choice; Mahmoud Ahmedinijad was the second.[54] His speeches are sold on CDs and DVDs; many download lines from his speeches as cell phone ring tones.[55] His intellectual prowess, media savvy, and ability to straddle both the religious and political worlds contribute to his ability to effectively and legitimately lead Hizbullah. Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon once referred to Nasrallah as "…the shrewdest leader in the Arab world – and the most dangerous."[56]

SOCIAL WELFARE

Since its inception, Hizbullah has established an extensive and far-reaching network of social services. While the majority of Hizbullah's social service organizations are located in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the southern part of Lebanon, and the Biqaa' Valley, the party provides services throughout the country. Thus, while the majority of their services are directed at the Shi'ite population, the greater Lebanese population also benefits significantly.

Hizbullah's services vary widely. The organization provides health clinics, educational opportunities, childcare and orphanages, food, and housing to those in need.[57]

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[53] Harel and Issacharoff, 34.
[54] *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, ed. Nicholas Noe, trans. Ellen Khouri (London: Verso, 2007), 1.
[55] Wright, 159-160.
[56] Ibid, 160.
[57] A. Nizar Hamzeh, "Hizballah: Islamic Charity in Lebanon," in *Understanding Islamic Charities*, ed. Jon B. Alterman and Karim von Hippel (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, 2007), 131.

It pays special attention to those who fight for the group, giving financial support to the injured and those families whose relatives have been killed in resistance activities. In keeping with the group's Islamic character, Hizbullah purports to follow the Qur'anic dictum that all charity funds must go towards social welfare and the way of Allah. In some interpretations, this includes armed and political jihad.[58]

While much of the funding for these programs comes from the *khoms* and *zakat*, or alms, that Hizbullah collects annually, Iran heavily subsidizes the provided services. Additionally, Hizbullah has invested in multiple business ventures, both legal and otherwise. For example, while the organization operates a number of grocery stores throughout Lebanon, it is also heavily involved in narcotics trafficking and arms trade.

Both during and after the 2006 war, Hizbullah demonstrated and utilized the extent of its social welfare network to its fullest. During the war, Hizbullah provided many required services, including trash collection and supplying water. The group also took responsibility for a number of construction projects and repaired hospitals, civic centers, and schools (particularly in Beirut).[59] Iran assisted in these endeavors, providing Hizbullah with sufficient funding so that the group was able to distribute $10,000 to eligible organization members, thereby ensuring that supporters had rent money for a year.[60] By spearheading the rehabilitation efforts, Hizbullah reinforced the perception that it had the ability to provide for the Lebanese more effectively than the official Lebanese government could. As a result, social service provision has and continues to be integral to Hizbullah's survival and popularity. Nizar Hamzeh observes that, "a cyclical relationship exists in which the social service cycle is a major force for transforming society. Hizballah's social services network has created a unique type of clientalism that is

[58] Ibid, 143.
[59] Ibid, 132.
[60] Ibid.

supported and reinforced by patrons' and clients' shared faith in a primordial framework of community sharing."[61]

STRATEGIC MEDIA

Hizbullah heavily utilizes the media to facilitate recruitment and outreach. Eyal Zisser, an Israeli scholar, notes that "Hizbullah has always been obsessed by its own media coverage."[62] Presently, Hizbullah's media conglomerate includes: a monthly magazine entitled *Qubthut Allah* (The Fist of God); a radio station named *al-Nour* (The Light); a weekly newspaper, *al-Intiqad (*The Criticism); and, most well-known, a television station called *al-Manar* (The Lighthouse/The Beacon). The organization also runs a number of websites, including its homepage, *al-Moqawama* (The Resistance).

Al-Manar, which is headquartered in Beirut, has traditionally provided Hizbullah with its greatest strategic capacity. Established in 1991, "the bulk of the station's programming was aimed at sustaining and, if possible, strengthening the Lebanese public's support for Hezbollah's campaign of resistance again (sic) the IDF [Israeli Defense Force] in south Lebanon, while at the same time pressuring Israeli viewers to push their governments for a unilateral withdrawal."[63] The station, which provides 24-hour programming, broadcasts both terrestrially and via satellite. As a result, it is able to target and tweak its programming both for its local audiences, which include the Lebanese and those in northern Israel,[64] as well as a global audience.[65] As Hizbullah grew, the station shifted from focusing primarily on Lebanese audiences to Arab

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[61] Ibid, 143.

[62] Eyal Zisser, "The Return of Hizbullah," *Middle East Quarterly* IX, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 5.

[63] Maura Conway, "Terrorism and the Making of the 'New Middle East': New Media Strategies of Hezbollah and al Qaeda," in *New Media and the New Middle East*, ed. Philip Seib (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 239-240.

[64] Al-Manar's signal reaches approximately 30 miles into Israel, reaching Haifa. See: Conway, 242.

[65] Some estimates suggest that al-Manar had 10 million viewers globally in 2003 and 2004. See: Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of State, 2005), 100 in Conway, 251.

audiences overall; the station has advertised itself as "*Qanat al-'Arab wa al-Muslimiin,"* or "the channel of Arabs and Muslims."[66]

Lebanese television largely reflects the sectarian society. In 1996, the Lebanese government licensed five television stations, each of which was associated with a particular sect.[67] Al-Manar was not one of the stations licensed; however, the station was allowed to continue broadcasting because both Syrian and Lebanese officials viewed as an integral part of the mission to resist Israeli occupation.

Al-Manar produces much of its own programming, allowing it to control and instill its messaging in all of its shows. Programming largely focuses on fighting the Zionist entity, amplifying anti-American sentiment, supporting the Palestinians, and encouraging individuals to join the resistance. By some estimates, half of the station's programming focuses on the Palestinian struggle.[68]

The programming targets a wide variety of demographics and includes "news, talk shows, documentary series, propaganda music videos, and other elements."[69] The channel also provides viewers with opportunities to donate money to Hizbullah, although it is widely believed that most funding for the station comes from Iran.

Al-Manar played an integral role in the 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah. Israel, noting the station's role in disseminating Hizbullah's message, bombed the Beirut headquarters on July 13, 2006. Hizbullah's programming continued uninterrupted, causing the Israeli Air Force to bomb the station a second time. Although the strikes

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[66] Avi Jorisch, *Beacon of Hatred: Inside Hizballah's al-Manar Television* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2004), 27.

[67] These stations include: Tele-Liban (government-owned); Lebanese Broadcasting Company International (Maronite); *al-Mustaqbal*, or Future Television (Sunni); Murr Television (Greek Orthodox); and the National Broadcasting Network (Shi'ite). For more information on each of these stations, see: Jorisch, 24.

[68] Robert Fisk, "Television News Is Secret Weapon of the Intifada," *The Independent*, December 2, 2000 in Conway, 240.

[69] Programs offered before the 2006 war included: *The Spider's House*, which focused on Israel's weaknesses; *What's Next*, a political talk show that focuses on anti-American sentiments; *My Blood and the Rifle,* a series that documents Hisbullah's fighters; *Terrorists*, a program that discusses Israel's actions, and *In Spite of the Wounds,* which highlights those injured fighting Israel. See : Jorisch, xv.

weakened the signal, al-Manar continued its broadcast nearly uninterrupted for the entirety of the 34-day war.[70] Nasrallah used the channel as the megaphone through which he addressed his audiences and responded to the Israeli attacks. In one particularly effective use of the channel, Nasrallah proclaimed that he was looking at an Israeli naval ship and ordered a strike on it. Within five minutes, al-Manar showed real-time footage of an Israeli Navy corvette burning as the result of two missile strikes.

After the 2006 war, a number of countries banned al-Manar. However, because Hizbullah has increasingly turned to web platforms to disseminate its message and attract supporters, the station now streams online, allowing the group to circumvent the bans. This online programming is largely in Arabic, but occasionally available in French, English, and Hebrew. Al-Manar remains Nasrallah's official platform and continues to be popular throughout the Arab world.

CONCLUSION

Hizbullah is a well-organized and extensive organization with both political and military wings. The group's success, largely derived from its ability to provide for its constituencies and its perceived victory against Israel in 2000, has made it one of the foremost actors in the Middle East. In addition to these social and tactical victories, Secretary-General Nasrallah, widely lauded for his rhetorical abilities, has been largely credited for using the media and public addresses to reinforce Hizbullah's credibility and relevance. In order to fully understand the ways in which Hizbullah functions and legitimizes itself, it becomes necessary to analyze the way in which its leader addresses its constituencies.

[70] On occasion, Israel was able to intercept al-Manar's signal and use the channel to broadcast its own imagery; this was part of the psychological operations campaign the Israelis employed during the war.

Chapter 3: The 2006 Israel-Hizbullah War[71]

INTRODUCTION

This section provides a brief overview of the war between Israel and Hizbullah, noting the strategic choices that both Israel and Hizbullah made during the 34-day conflict. This summary includes a particular focus on how Nasrallah utilized the media and his communications throughout the war.

The remainder of the chapter focuses on the statements that Nasrallah made throughout the war. Using content analysis, I demonstrate the ways in which Nasrallah legitimized himself and Hizbullah's mission, communicated with his various constituencies, and navigated through a conflict in which there was no clear military victory. This analysis illustrates that Nasrallah framed his comments within three overarching themes: an "us versus them" narrative; the fulfillment of a divinely inspired mission; and Hizbullah's role as the defender and provider of the Lebanese. I also demonstrate that Nasrallah sought to minimize divisions within his constituencies by focusing on commonly-held values, such as dignity and solidarity.

THE 2006 WAR: A RECOUNTING

On July 12, 2006, shortly after 9 A.M., Hizbullah fighters attacked two Israeli Humvees patrolling the Israeli side of the Israeli-Lebanese border. Immediately after the ambush, Hizbullah launched an artillery attack on an Israeli border settlement and nearby military installations. In the chaos, Hizbullah had the opportunity to abduct two Israeli soldiers, Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. An additional eight were killed in the ambush. Hizbullah stated that its goals included forcing the release of Lebanese prisoners from Israeli prisons and demonstrating solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza following Israel's June 2006 raids.

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[71] Other names for the war include: the 2006 Lebanon War; the July War (in Lebanon); and the Second Lebanon War (in Israel).

The attack was not entirely unsurprising. Since Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 (with the exception of the 25 square miles surrounding the Sheba'a Farms), Israel and Hizbullah had largely maintained a quiet, albeit tense, relationship. However, relations between the two began deteriorating in 2005. Hizbullah attempted to kidnap several Israeli soldiers from the border village of Ghajar in November 2005. Israeli officials, who were growing increasingly annoyed with Hizbullah's taunting after the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, learned that the group was in the process of developing "'first strike' capacity to unleash massive, preemptive rocket attempts on Israel."[72] Although Nasrallah publically stated that the summer would be "quiet" in June 2006, tensions between the two grew.

Following the abduction, Israel responded with a massive air campaign, aimed at crippling Lebanon's ability to function. On July 13, 2006, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) bombed the Rafik Hariri International Airport in Beirut and instituted a naval blockade. The IAF also struck al-Manar's headquarters in Beirut and Nasrallah's office, though Nasrallah and other senior Hizbullah officials had gone into hiding. Additional targets included bridges in southern and central Lebanon, cellular phone antennas, oil reserves and gasoline stations.[73] By the second week of the war, Israel bolstered its initial air campaign with ground forces. The damage in Lebanon was extensive.

Hizbullah's status as a non-state political actor complicated Israel's responses. Accounts indicate that the Israeli government considered three distinct options for retaliation: strike Hizbullah only; strike Hizbullah and strategic Syrian targets; and/or strike Hizbullah and the infrastructure in Lebanon.[74] Israel held the Lebanese government responsible for their inability to control Hizbullah, and thus coordinated an attack meant

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[72] Gary C. Gambill, "The Counter-Revolution of the Cedars," *Mideast Monitor* 1, no. 3 (September-October 2006): 2, http://www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0609/0609_1.htm in Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 134.
[73] Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 82.
[74] Harel and Issacharoff, 80.

to cripple the country. Hizbullah's decisions had real, and powerful, foreign policy implications.

Lebanese politicians recognized the implications of Hizbullah's attack and scrambled to limit the impact of the group's decision. The government, led by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, moved to distance itself from the attack and disavowed Hizbullah's actions. Lebanese Minister of Information, Ghazi al-'Aridi, stated, "the government of Lebanon knew nothing of this morning's incident and is not responsible for it."[75] Others within the March 14 coalition, which is comprised of both Sunni and Christian members, followed suit and decried the attack.

Israel's overarching goal involved isolating and destroying Hizbullah. However, despite Israel's attempts, three factors largely precluded the country from realizing its goals: Israel's mission was poorly defined and overly ambitious; Hizbullah had accumulated a large arms cache and trained to use increasingly sophisticated tactics; and the Israeli government had a poor tactical and strategic understanding of the group. Over the course of the war, Hizbullah launched more than 4,000 rockets and projectiles into Israel and engaged in ground combat with 30,000 Israeli troops.[76] After the war, Israeli officials widely acknowledged that they had misjudged the extent to with Hizbullah had developed and honed their military abilities.

NASRALLAH, THE WAR, AND THE MEDIA

Although neither side scored a military victory, Nasrallah's ability to manipulate the media allowed Hizbullah to continue garnering support throughout the war. Nasrallah, in keeping with his keen appreciation of the crucial importance of the war of narratives, claimed to have achieved a "strategic and historic victory."[77] According to scholar Reinoud Leenders:

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[75] Harel and Issacharoff, 82.

[76] William M. Arkin, "Divine Victory for Whom?: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Winter 2007): 101.

[77] Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Operations in Israel's War Against Hezbollah: Learning from Lebanon and*

> Hizbullah consciously focused on accumulating what may be called symbolic capital, which it sensed would enable it to legitimately and convincingly impose its views concerning the various political crises and violence pertaining the region at large. Such views included those regarding the wicked designs for a "new" Middle East by Israel and the US, regarding Lebanon's quandary since Syria's withdrawal of troops in 2005 and, foremost, concerning the party's own role in resisting foreign encroachment and enhancing Arab and Lebanese steadfastness. In brief, the war enabled Hizbullah to carve out for itself and its military agenda a social and political space that, prior to this war and due to a host of reasons, had become dangerously narrow.[78]

Over the course of the war, Nasrallah delivered seven speeches on al-Manar. These speeches occurred on the following dates: July 12, July 14, July 25, July 29, August 9, August 12, and August 14.[79] A press conference followed the July 12 speech, providing members of the media with an opportunity to question Hizbullah. However, Nasrallah did not deliver any of the remaining speeches in public. Security concerns dictated that he remain in hiding.

Befitting the circumstances, Nasrallah framed his message with three particular themes: the "us versus them" narrative; the fulfillment of a divinely inspired mission, also known as the *NasR ilaahi*, or divine triumph theme; and Hizbullah's role as the defender and protector of the Lebanese and the Palestinians. Nasrallah repeatedly qualified Hizbullah's mission as defensive.[80] Nasrallah often used language generally reserved for the nation-state, particularly when he spoke about protecting the nation and providing for the Lebanese after the war. Across these themes, he chose his words to foster a sense of community and common purpose and generally avoided using either religious or ethnic sectarian terminology. His remarks were largely inclusive and appealed to a wide swath of supporters; he structured his religious comments to appeal to both the Muslim and the

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Getting it Right in Gaza (Santa Monica: Rand, 2011), 67.

[78] Reinoud Leenders, "How the Rebel Regained His Cause: Hizbullah and the Sixth Arab-Israeli War," *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 6 (Summer 2006), 42.

[79] Al-Jazeera provides Arabic summaries of the seven speeches here: http://www.aljazeera.net/coverage/pages/3a4b7d4a-b37a-470f-94db-a1973973c557.

[80] Hizbullah often refers to itself as *al-moqawama al-Islamiyya*, or the Islamic resistance.

Christian communities. Additionally, he often appealed to values widely held through the Arab world, including the sense of *karaama*, or dignity, and *taDamun*, or solidarity, in his remarks.

The "Us Versus Them" Narrative

Nasrallah consistently utilized the "us versus them" narrative throughout his speeches, a common theme in Hizbullah-produced media. Depending on his audience, the "us" included Hizbullah supporters, the Lebanese, the Palestinians, and/or the overall Arab population. The "them" generally referred to Israel, the United States, or the United States and Israel in tandem.

Nasrallah's initially utilized the "us versus them" narrative during his first speech of the war, shortly after he explained the reasoning and operations behind that morning's attack. He spoke explicitly about the Israeli government, saying:

> If the Israel enemy wants an escalation and thinks it can make Lebanon pay the price, then we are ready for a confrontation to the farthest limit this enemy and the ones behind it may imagine. The Israelis currently in power include Olmert, who is a new prime minister. There are also a new defence minister and new chief of staff. I advise them before they meet at 2000 to ask the former presidents and ministers about their experience in Lebanon. When one is still new, he may be cheated. In order not to be cheated, they should first ask and make sure.[81]

Later, in one of the most famous statements of the war, Nasrallah addressed the Israeli population explicitly on July 14. His declaration followed the initial days of the IAF air campaign, which quickly inflicted significant, and unexpected, damage on Lebanon. As a result, Nasrallah challenged the Israelis with the following threat:

> You wanted an open war; we are going to an open war and we are ready for it. It will be a war on every level, to Haifa, and believe me, beyond Haifa, and beyond, beyond Haifa. We will not be the only ones to pay the price or have our houses destroyed, our children killed and our people driven out of their homes. Those

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[81] Hassan Nasrallah (Speech, al-Manar, July 12, 2006), MideastWire.com, http://www.mideastwire.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/index.php?action=timesearch&news_day=14&news_month=7&news_year=2006.

> days are over and were in the past, before 1982 and 2000. I promise you that those days are over. You will be responsible for what your government did.[82]

As the war progressed, Nasrallah expanded the "us versus them" theme to highlight the clash between Lebanon and the American-Israeli axis. On July 25, Nasrallah addressed the entire Lebanese population, saying:

> "Our brothers, today, the plan based on which the war was waged and designed aims to bring Lebanon back to the circle of US-Israeli control and hegemony. This would be worse than the 1982 incursion and 17 May agreement. What they want is that Lebanon would depart from and leave behind its history, obligations, culture and true identity in order that Lebanon would become an American-Zionist state run by America and Israel through Lebanese obedient and helpless figures.[83]

A few days later, on July 29, Nasrallah underscored the camaraderie between the Lebanese and the Palestinians as they worked towards the common goal of defeating Israel. He mused that:

> This explains to us the statement of Shimon Peres in which he said that it is a battle of life or death for Israel. He certainly does not mean that the resistance in Lebanon will enter Palestine, liberate Palestine, and eliminate and destroy the entity. However, he knows full well that this wonderful Lebanese steadfastness and this valiancy, if it is crowned with victory, will destroy the haughtiness, mighty arrogance, and the spirit on which his entity was established, and consequently, this entity will have no future. This is the story of life and death in the battle Israel is waging now. When the people of this transient state lose their confidence in their legendary army, the end of this entity will begin…when they feel that this army is impotent, weak, defeated, humiliated, and failed, the issue will be one of life or death.[84]

By utilizing the "us versus them" mentality, Nasrallah legitimized himself in two specific ways. First, by placing himself as the counterweight to two roundly despised entities, the state of Israel and the American government, he automatically imbued

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[82] Hassan Nasrallah (Speech, al-Manar, July 14, 2006), MideastWire.com, http://www.mideastwire.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/index.php?action=timesearch&news_day=17&news_month=7&news_year=2006.

[83] Hassan Nasrallah (Speech, al-Manar, July 25, 2006), MideastWire.com, http://www.mideastwire.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/index.php?action=timesearch&news_day=27&news_month=7&news_year=2006 .

[84] Hassan Nasrallah (Speech, al-Manar, July 29, 2006), MideastWire.com, http://www.mideastwire.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/index.php?action=timesearch&news_day=31&news_month=7&news_year=2006#9540.

himself with a sense of moral authority. He communicated that Hizbullah, despite instigating the war and inflicting significant damage on the Lebanese, continued to fight for the greater good. As the face of Hizbullah, he represented this struggle for betterment and empowerment.

Additionally, Nasrallah's rhetoric indicated that he would not be cowed into submission. By continuing to stand up to Israel, and occasionally the Americans, he reminded his followers of Hizbullah's success in forcing Israel's retreat from Lebanon. This feat, which no other Arab government had been able to accomplish, conferred a mantle of legitimacy and respect on his leadership capabilities.

The Divinely Inspired Mission

In many of his speeches, Nasrallah proclaimed that Hizbullah, its fighters, and its supporters, were working in tandem to fulfill a divinely inspired mission and achieve a divine triumph. From the inception of the war, Nasrallah signaled to his followers that God sanctioned the mission, thereby laying out its celestial nature. In his July 12 speech and press conference at the start of the war, Nasrallah exclaimed:

> We will go to it with firm determination, strong faith, and confidence in the victory that will be granted by the almighty God. I know that all the honest and faithful Lebanese people as well as the Arab and Islamic peoples and all free and honourable people in the world stand by our side. We are not at all isolated. The one who sides with the enemy will be the one isolated by this nation. The one who sides with the resistance will be the one who acts in harmony with this nation. This is my message to the enemy.[85]

He varied the placement of these invocations throughout his speeches. For example, although Nasrallah generally opened his speeches with the customary "In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate," he would occasionally draw out this supplication. At the beginning of his July 29 speech, Nasrallah proclaimed to his audience:

> God Almighty says in His glorious Book: In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate, 'Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise): they fight in His cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the Koran: and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah. then

[85] Nasrallah, July 12, 2006.

> rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: that is the achievement supreme.'[86]

At other times, Nasrallah reminded his audience about the goal of divine triumph near the end of the speech, a move that was likely meant to leave his viewers with a heightened sense of motivation. For example, when concluding his August 9 speech, Nasrallah spoke directly to those fighting on behalf of Hizbullah, saying:

> To every mujahid in the resistance today, to every mujahid who is still fighting and to every mujahid who is lurking in wait and is waiting; to all those heroes who are alive, who kept their promise to God and never changed and will not change, God willing, I say the words of their emir, God's blessings be upon him: Plant your feet firm in the ground. The mountains will move, but you won't. Lend God your skull and look at the farthest side of the enemy ranks, and know that victory is granted by the Almighty God.[87]

Nasrallah did not reserve the invocation of the divine for people. He also suggested Allah blessed Hizbullah's tactical maneuvers and technology. In one particularly memorable quotation, he proclaimed, "We assert to you that these rockets are guided by God and are guided technically."[88]

Of particular note, when Nasrallah invoked the divine mission, he rarely referred specifically to Islam. Instead, he either spoke generally or peppered his speeches with references to which both Muslims and Christians could connect. For example, in Nasrallah's July 29 speech, he declared:

> It will be a victory for every Arab, Muslim, Christian, and honorable person in the world who stood against the aggression and defended Lebanon by word, action, or support…[t]his victory will be a strong motive for us to embody our national unity, which our people embody these days and through which they embody the values of Jesus Christ, peace be upon him, and those of Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, in terms of solidarity, amity, support, cooperation, and love which was expressed by all people.[89]

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[86] Nasrallah, July 29, 2006.
[87] Hassan Nasrallah (Speech, al-Manar, August 9, 2006), http://www.mideastwire.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/index.php?action=timesearch&news_day=11&news_month=8&news_year=2006#9876.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Nasrallah, July 29, 2006.

By invoking the divine, Nasrallah had the ability to call on God to validate Hizbullah's actions. By proxy, Nasrallah could argue that his leadership was divinely sanctioned, despite not being a particularly learned religious scholar. As a result, this divine inspiration conferred further legitimacy on his authority.

Hizbullah, the Defender

Throughout the conflict, Nasrallah often referred to Hizbullah as the defender of both the Lebanese and the Palestinians. By doing so, he accomplished two separate goals: to justify Hizbullah's role in aiding the Lebanese Armed Forces and to refuse to disarm per Security Council Resolution 1701,[90] which ended the war. Each of these tactics afforded Nasrallah legitimacy as the protector and vanguard of Lebanon.

Throughout the conflict, Nasrallah asserted that Hizbullah remained the preeminent military force in the country. He used evidence of Hizbullah's military and tactical capabilities, such as when the group struck the Israeli naval corvette in real time on al-Manar, to reinforce these statements and validate his claims. He did not deride the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) while maintaining Hizbullah's stature. Instead, he openly acknowledged the role of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in protecting Lebanon, stating that Hizbullah supported the army and its deployment. Yet concurrently, he questioned the LAF's ability to protect the nation, asking, "…[c]an the Lebanese Army, with its current conditions and capabilities, fight a war if a war is imposed on Lebanon?…this is an issue that is linked to the country's destiny and the protection of the country, and we should not deal with it lightly or with such haste."[91]

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[90] For the full text of Security Council Resolution 1701, see: www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8808.doc.htm

[91] Hassan Nasrallah (Speech, al-Manar, August 14, 2006), MideastWire.com, http://www.mideastwire.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/index.php?action=timesearch&news_day=16&news_month=8&news_year=2006#9976.

Similarly, Nasrallah underscored the need for Hizbullah to aid the army when he discussed the best way in which to protect Lebanon's borders on August 9. According to Nasrallah:

> Deploying a regular army along the international borders directly face to face with an enemy that might at any time transgress is like placing this army in the mouth of a dragon or, as we say here in colloquial Arabic, face to face with the muzzle of a gun. An army that does not have tanks, armoured vehicles, air force or sufficient aerial cover might be destroyed in few days if it comes under any aggression. The battles that have thus far taken place in the south testify to this. The resistance has thus far been steadfast in Ayta al-Sha'b, Kfar Kila, Al-Udaysah, Al-Tayibah, Bint Jubayl, Aytarun and in all frontline towns because it has no classical or regular presence there. It has a different way to be present there. It has no aerial cover. The Israeli enemy bombs, strikes and destroys, but it could not weaken the resolve of the mujahidin and their manoeuvrability. We care about the army in the border area. Yes, we agreed in the government - and I will return to our considerations shortly - to the deployment of the army to the border area, but we do not hide our fear for it. Given its current status and capabilities, if we deploy the army in the border area and if the sticking issues between Lebanon and the Israeli enemy remain unresolved, particularly if Lebanon remains prone to the Israeli aerial, sea and ground violations which have never ceased since the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, this means that we will place the army directly in the mouth of the dragon.[92]

From this discourse, it is clear that Nasrallah viewed Hizbullah as the true protector and defender of Lebanon. In many ways, he could easily support this claim; Hizbullah was, and continues to be, better armed and trained than the Lebanese Armed Forces. It forced Israel to leave when no one else had the ability to do so. Its fighters possess sophisticated military prowess. Additionally, by championing Hizbullah's role as the main defender, Nasrallah legitimized his own leadership. The most basic role of the state is to provide national security for its people; it appears that Nasrallah felt that he filled that void in Lebanon.

U.N. Security Council Resolution (U.N.S.C.R.) 1701, which ended the war, called on Hizbullah to disarm. Historically, Hizbullah has rejected disarmament; for example,

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[92] Nasrallah, August 9, 2006.

although the Ta'if Accords called for all Lebanese armed militias to disarm, Hizbullah was allowed to keep its weapons so that it could continue with its mission of resistance. Despite Israel's withdrawal in 2000, this exception for Hizbullah remains.

Therefore, the language of U.N.S.C.R. 1701 compelled Nasrallah to discuss, and then refuse, disarmament. In tandem both with Hizbullah's role as both the resistance and the defender, Nasrallah flatly rejected the possibility of disarmament, stating:

> Some people said that they wanted Hezbollah to hand over its weapons to the state. Have those great people liberated Shab'a Farms and secured the return of people to their lands in Shab'a Farms? Do they ask us to hand over our weapons because they freed prisoners? Do they come to us with real guarantees of protecting Lebanon against the Israeli enemy, which is still threatening? Olmert was levelling threats before I came to have this message recorded. Lebanon is still being threatened and might be attacked any time. Who will defend this country? Who will teach the enemy a lesson? Who will make the enemy pay a heavy price? Today, we can proudly say that if any Israeli government decides to launch war in the future, it will take into consideration that war with Lebanon will not be a picnic. War with Lebanon will be very costly in terms of human, material and economic losses, as well as in terms of the loss of dignity and image.[93]

Nasrallah's dismissal of disarmament allowed him to signal two distinct, yet related messages. First, he rejected the authority of the Security Council, which he had previously excoriated for its refusal to charge Israel with war crimes as a result of its conduct, particularly after the Qana massacre.[94] Additionally, he maintained Hizbullah's sovereignty and identity, for how can a resistance movement achieve its goals if forced to give up its armaments? By protecting Hizbullah's identity and mission, Nasrallah further demonstrated his commitment to the cause and reinforced his own legitimacy.

Hizbullah, the Provider

Nasrallah necessarily focused on the role of Hizbullah as the defender in the beginning of the conflict. As a corollary, he also discussed the role of Hizbullah as the

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[93] Nasrallah, August 14, 2006

[94] Hassan Nasrallah (Speech, al-Manar, August 12, 2006), MideastWire.com, http:/http://www.mideastwire.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/index.php?action=timesearch&news_day=14&news_month=8&news_year=2006#9917.

provider, when he largely referred to the ways in which Hizbullah had acted as a stopgap for the government. For example, in his speech on July 12, he commented generally on the ways in which Hizbullah might support the official Lebanese government as it provided for its citizens, saying: "We have called and continue to call and repeat that the country needs a national unity government and this is our logic and stand. But while we call for a national unity government, we remain ready to cooperate on all files, on the electricity, social security, water, and other files as well as the minimum wages."[95]

As the war drew to a close and issues of the post-war reconstruction surfaced, Nasrallah brought increased focus to the narrative of Hizbullah as the provider. This emphasis is unsurprising; a central tenet of Hizbullah's strategy and recruitment centers on the provision of social services. During the war, Hizbullah continued to provide essential services, such as trash collection and running water. It stepped in where the government was unable to operate. These weaknesses did not go unmentioned. While Nasrallah continuously called for cooperation and support from the Lebanese government and recognized the role of the government in supporting the state, he spoke bluntly about the government's limitations and role of Hizbullah in providing for the Lebanese. By doing so, he defined the relationship between Hizbullah and the government as a supportive and competitive one simultaneously.

The best example of this language comes from two stanzas of Nasrallah's August 14 speech, when he addressed the question of how to best begin rebuilding the country. According to Nasrallah:

> Regarding the houses that were damaged but are still habitable, starting tomorrow morning, the brothers in the towns, villages, and cities will take the initiative and will contact and visit the owners of these homes to offer direct and swift assistance in order to kick start the restoration of these homes back to a habitable state as fast as possible. As for the demolished homes - the harder issue - I wish to first reassure these honourable families that they need not worry. What I said in

[95] Nasrallah, July 12, 2006.

> the first days of the war was not simply meant to boost your steadfastness. No, today is the day I keep my word and fulfill this promise. God willing, you will not need to ask for help, stand in any lines, or go to certain places; our brothers, who are your brothers and sons, in all areas, towns, villages and neighbourhoods will, God willing, come to your service starting tomorrow morning.
>
> We will work together on this matter. We cannot of course wait for the government and its heavy vehicles and machinery because they could be a while, at any rate, the government's movements will come to light in the near future, but what we can do is work together along two simultaneous tracks starting tomorrow. The first being securing a reasonable sum of money for each family to help it rent a house for a year and buy decent and suitable furniture for this house, because the reconstruction of houses and apartment buildings requires months, and the natural alternative for now is for people to rent and furnish houses. This will start tomorrow, and I can say that in the coming few days, all these cases, even though great in number and serous, will be covered. So far, the initial count available to us on completely demolished houses exceeds 15,000 residential units. We understand that this is a monumental and serious affair, but, God willing, we have enough resolve for this task and achievement.[96]

By laying out this agenda and defining Hizbullah's role as the provider, Nasrallah accomplished two specific and interconnected goals. First, he reminded the Lebanese of Hizbullah's power relative to that of the official Lebanese government, despite the destruction levied during a war that Hizbullah instigated. He asserted that Hizbullah would more effectively and efficiently respond to the needs of the Lebanese – a claim on which the group followed through. Second, he assured individuals that they would be taken care of – and, as discussed in Chapter Two – Hizbullah had the resources to keep these promises. As a result, Hizbullah retained its legitimacy, both on its own and in comparison to the Lebanese government. Nasrallah's ability to suggest that Hizbullah was the true defender and provider, and then follow through on his promises, legitimized both the group and himself as a leader.

Emphasis on Dignity and Solidarity

Throughout the conflict, Nasrallah repeatedly discussed the importance of dignity amongst Hizbullah's constituencies. His emphasis on these two features highlighted the

[96] Nasrallah, August 14, 2006.

values that he wished to impart to his supporters; he discussed both in every speech that he gave throughout the war.

Dignity

The concept of "dignity" played a recurring role in Nasrallah's rhetoric, where he often paired the importance of dignity in contrast to the devastation of humiliation. For example, in Nasrallah's speech on July 25, he stressed:

> I would like to assert that we can never accept any condition that will humiliate our country, people or resistance. Nor will we accept any formula that could come at the expense of national interests, sovereignty, independence, especially after all these sacrifices no matter how long the confrontation would last and regardless of the great sacrifices we will offer. Our true and basic motto is: Dignity first.[97]

Later in the speech, he returned to the dichotomy of dignity and humiliation when discussing the material and psychological effects of the war. Nasrallah proclaimed that, "[t]he houses were destroyed and they will be rebuilt, God willing. The infrastructure was damaged and it will be rebuilt, God willing. However, we will not allow anybody to take away our dignity. We can never accept any humiliating conditions."[98]

By focusing on the role of dignity, Nasrallah identified a particularly sensitive area in Arab culture. Since Israel's establishment in 1948, humiliation has figured as a common theme in public discourse. The way in which the Israeli Defense Forces totally defeated the Arab armies first in 1948 and again in 1967 shocked and humiliated the Arabs. These losses resulted in an extended social discourse about the Arabs' inferiority in the face of Israel's successes.

Hizbullah's perceived victory over Israel in 2000 damaged significantly the common perception that Israel's defenses were impermeable. By defeating Israel, a feat which no other Arab army had managed, Hizbullah began to restore the collective dignity. As a result, Nasrallah's emphasis on dignity served two purposes: first, it was an

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[97] Nasrallah, July 25, 2006.
[98] Ibid.

unconscious reminder of Hizbullah's previous successes. More importantly, it was a tacit recognition of the importance of dignity in a society that had long felt powerless and humiliated. By recognizing and vocalizing the value of dignity, Nasrallah identified and verbalized a need among his constituency, thereby contributing to his own power and authority.

Solidarity

Similarly, the concept of solidarity played a central role in each of the seven speeches. Nasrallah's definition of solidarity was fluid; at times, he referred specfically to the Lebanese, while in others he referenced the larger Arab population. Still at other times, he talked about the solidarity that existed between the Palestinians and the Lebanese. Simultaneously, he minimized his usage of sectarian terminology, underscoring the importance of solidarity throughout the conflict.

During his initial address, Nasrallah focused specifically on the Lebanese when he delivered the following missive:

> "The following is my message to Lebanon. This is not the right time for one-upmanship, discussions, and arguments in Lebanon. I am not asking anybody for support or backing, but I want to draw the attention of Lebanese people, including officials and non-officials, to refrain from acting in a way that would encourage the enemy against Lebanon or to speak or act in a way that would provide cover for the Israeli aggression against Lebanon. It is time for solidarity and cooperation to confront this obligation. We will later be ready for any discussion or argument. Beware of committing any mistake that may help, back, or support aggression. This is the time for national feelings and responsibility to prevail. We acted with a national sense of responsibility. You may discuss what is right or wrong with me and this is good, but the country is now facing an obligation. All should behave with a national sense of responsibility. The Lebanese Government should behave in a national sense of responsibility.[99]

The way in which Nasrallah singles out the Lebanese government when discussing solidarity suggests that he anticipated a lack of support. He was not incorrect to do so; although the Lebanese government eventually backed Nasrallah, many

[99] Nasrallah, July 12, 2006.

bureaucrats publicly distanced themselves from his actions at the beginning of the war. This quotation suggests that Nasrallah anticipated that this schism could rend Lebanese society and hoped to preempt that division, emphasizing the need for solidarity above all else.

Later, Nasrallah highlighted the importance of solidarity both among the Lebanese and the greater Arab community. On July 25, Nasrallah proclaimed:

> It will be a victory for every Arab, Muslim, Christian, and honourable person in the world who stood against the aggression and defended Lebanon by word, action, or support. This victory will be a strong motive for the resistance and its supporters to show more love and amity to all the Lebanese, particularly those who supported them in politics and in the media and those who received, embraced, and showed hospitality to them in Sidon, the northern Jabal Lubnan, the southern Jabal Lubnan, Beirut, the north, and Al-Biqa. This victory will be a motive for making Lebanon more beautiful than it was. Lebanon will be beautiful, yet strong and proud.[100]

In tandem with his focus on solidarity, Nasrallah rarely used sectarian terminology in his rhetoric, instead preferring to emphasize the unity of Lebanon in the face of the Zionist threat. While he would occasionally refer to Shi'ite religious symbols, these references were minimal. Instead, he employed nationalist language that allowed him to underscore that the war was a shared Lebanese and/or Arab experience. By doing so, he intended to align the Arab world against Israel – a key strategy during a conflict when numerous Arab leaders, including Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Saudi King Abdullah, had publically questioned his strategy and tactics in instigating the war. In doing so, Nasrallah presented himself as a counterweight, further legitimizing himself.

Similarly, Nasrallah often referred to the Palestinians and the Lebanese as brothers, allowing for support and commiseration in the camaraderie. In one particularly poignant phrase, he said, "[i]n the name of all the pure blood spilled in Lebanon and Palestine by the Lebanese and Palestinians, particularly from the Shi'is and Sunnis, we

[100] Nasrallah, July 25, 2006.

appeal to you and tell you: Beloved and dear brothers, do not go too far in what you are doing. The ones sewing enmity and hatred among you are the US occupation [in Iraq] and the Zionists."[101] As noted in the literature review, empathy for the plight of the Palestinians is considered a central ideology in Arab society and plays heavily into the establishment of legitimacy. While Hizbullah naturally identifies with the struggle of the Palestinians, viewing them as a brother resistance movement, Nasrallah's verbal and continued identification with the Palestinians verified his stature as an Arab leader.

CONCLUSION

Nasrallah's skillful use of rhetoric and communication throughout the July 2006 war evidenced his ability to address a wide variety of audiences simultaneously. The way in which he utilized these three particular themes, as well as his continued emphasis on communal values, underscored Hizbullah's mission and, by extension, Nasrallah's leadership. By shifting between these three themes, as well as tapering the message when necessary, Nasrallah was able to demonstrate that he knew how to guide and defend the Shi'ites, the Lebanese, the Palestinians, and the larger Arab world against the Zionist threat.

[101] Nasrallah, July 12, 2006.

Chapter 4: Nasrallah's Rhetoric and U.S. Foreign Policy

INTRODUCTION

The United States has provided military and financial support to Lebanon since the 1980s. Following the Cedar Revolution and the ensuing withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, the Bush Administration increased significantly the levels of aid provided. President Obama has continued with these policies, recognizing the importance of Lebanon in regional politics.

U.S.-funded programs in Lebanon, which largely focus on providing security assistance and promoting democratization and civil society, have realized moderate successes. Yet their impact remains limited, which may result in part from Nasrallah's messaging abilities. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Nasrallah often employs rhetoric that focuses on the "us versus them" narrative, the divine mission, the role of Hizbullah as the defender and the provider, and the importance of dignity and solidarity in Lebanese society. Yet there are ways in which this rhetoric is limiting, particularly given the current uprising in Syria and Nasrallah's continued backing for Syrian President Bashar al-Asad. Thus, in order to more effectively combat Nasrallah's appeal and legitimacy, as well as Hizbullah as an organization, the United States should focus its aid to Lebanon on strengthening the Lebanese security forces and countering Hizbullah's vast social service network. The United States should also consider concentrating its public diplomacy initiatives on exploiting Nasrallah's support for the Asad regime and providing aid to the anti-Syria March 14 coalition.

In this section, I provide a brief overview of the history of the relationship between the United States and Hizbullah. I then discuss current U.S. policies in Lebanon, specifically noting the difficulties in implementation that have resulted because of Hizbullah and possible areas for improvement. I continue by reviewing challenges that Hizbullah, and Nasrallah in particular, is presently facing in the Middle East, and how

these difficulties may detract from the group's authority and provide opportunities for the United States before offering some concluding thoughts on the future role of Hizbullah.

THE UNITED STATES AND HIZBULLAH: A HISTORY

The relationship between the United States and Hizbullah dates back to 1983, when Hizbullah bombed two American installments in Beirut: the U.S. embassy in April and the U.S. Marines barracks in October, which housed both American and French personnel. The attack against the embassy killed 63 and the bombing of the barracks killed 299, including 241 Americans. While Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for both bombings, evidence implicated Hizbullah. The group continues to deny its involvement in the attacks.

Throughout the 1980s, Hizbullah's participation in kidnappings and hijackings reinforced the enmity between the group and the United States. Hizbullah has also been accused of perpetrating the 1992 and 1994 bombings of the Israeli Embassy and Jewish centers in Argentina, although the group maintains that it was not involved.

As a result, the U.S. State Department designated Hizbullah as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) in 1997. State officials renewed this classification in 1999, in accordance with the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, Section 219. Due to its FTO status, all material support for Hizbullah is illegal. The United States does not distinguish between the organization's political or military wing.

In an attempt to mitigate Hizbullah's influence in Lebanon and the greater Middle East, the United States provides significant financial aid to the Lebanese government. This funding is largely predicated on strengthening Lebanon's military and security forces, encouraging democratization, and building civil society. However, Hizbullah's participation in the Lebanese government, where the group presently holds two cabinet posts and is part of the ruling coalition, complicates this aid.

NASRALLAH'S CURRENT CHALLENGES

The regional unrest within the Middle East has presented Hizbullah, and Nasrallah in particular, with a new set of challenges. Hizbullah's self-identification as a resistance movement has complicated its role within the uprisings of the Arab Spring. Nasrallah expressed support for the protests in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. In particular, he backed the protestors in Bahrain, given that the Bahraini Shi'ite population led the calls for change. Yet because of the patron-client relationship between Syria and Hizbullah, Nasrallah has continued to support Syrian President Bashar al-Asad, despite widespread reports that the regime has increasingly used brutality and violence against the protestors. Nasrallah has publicly justified this support for two reasons. First, he asserts that Syria is the only country in the Arab world capable of standing up to both the United States and Israel. Additionally, he argues that the Asad regime has pursued reforms internally, thus fulfilling the demands of those within the resistance movements.

Nasrallah's continued support for Syria has damaged significantly his credibility throughout the region, and with Sunnis in particular. Between Nasrallah's backing of Asad and the intra-governmental violence in 2008, Nasrallah is quickly losing the goodwill that he garnered after the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 and the war in 2006.

Given the current political situation in the Arab world, it is likely that Hizbullah will have to reassess its status as a political organization and decide the ways in which it will act as it moves forward.[102] In one scenario, Hizbullah may instigate another conflict with Israel in order to detract attention from the uprising in Syria; it is likely that any bellicose acts would come at the urging of Syria or Iran. However, Hizbullah could run significant existential risk by choosing this path; despite widespread popular support for Hizbullah during the 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon, the conflict inflicted heavy

[102] For a more detailed discussion of these two options, see: Mona Yacoubian, "Hezbollah After Assad: Why the Fall of Damascus Might Compel Hezbollah to Turn Inward," *Foreign Affairs,* December 1, 2011.

costs on Lebanon. Additionally, Lebanon has borne the brunt of the spillover from the Syrian uprising, further taxing the country. A renewed conflict with Israel, given the strain the Lebanese presently face, would likely be unpopular.

Hizbullah might also choose to respond to the situation in Syria by turning inward and focusing on its domestic political agenda. By doing so, the organization could demonstrate its focus on Lebanon and attempt to negate criticisms that it is merely a puppet for Syria and Iran. Yet this strategy also carries some inherent risks; by focusing domestically, Hizbullah may have to redefine itself first as a political actor within Lebanon, instead of as a resistance movement. Given that Hizbullah's funding and right to remain armed are predicated on the idea of resistance, as well as the party's larger popularity, the group may not want to engage in any activities that minimize that aspect its identity. At present, Hizbullah has largely removed itself from the spotlight in order to wait out the crisis and minimize the damage to its own platform.

As the crisis in Syria continues unabated, and geopolitical dynamics shift, it will be necessary to watch the ways in which Nasrallah presents himself and Hizbullah to its constituencies. By doing so, it will be possible to track what, if any, changes the group will embrace in order to sustain itself and its popularity. Having a better understanding of the previous ways in which Nasrallah communicated will shed light on the group's future plans.

HIZBULLAH AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Current U.S. policy towards Lebanon is largely based on four priorities: protecting Israel; strengthening existing Lebanese democratic institutions; minimizing Hizbullah's support within Lebanon; and combating terrorism. Marginalizing Hizbullah and detracting from the group's influence are key components of achieving these goals.

Following the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005 and the 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah, the Bush Administration requested a significant increase in funds to support Lebanon. The Obama Administration has continued this policy and asked for similar levels of allocations. Congress has approved each of these requests annually. As a result, between 2006 and 2011, the United States has provided Lebanon with more than $1.35 billion in financial aid to support programs meant to strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Forces (ISF), and build Lebanon's democratic and civil society institutions.[103] Examples of these programs include training both the LAF and the ISF,[104] supplying both with equipment and material support, funding programs to reduce sectarianism in the LAF, and providing assistance to grow and develop the Lebanese economy, particularly in agricultural areas.[105] Both the State Department and the Defense Department administer these funds.[106]

Despite the current fiscal concerns of the U.S. government, it is unlikely that future aid to Lebanon will cease.[107] Plans for the 2012 fiscal year include provisions to improve agribusiness, tourism, and entrepreneurial endeavors. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012 allowed for similar levels of funding, yet noted that the United States was banned from giving aid to any government that included Hizbullah.

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[103] Casey L. Addis and Christopher M. Blanchard, *Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress*, R41446 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 3, 2011), 1.

[104] The LAF is primarily responsible for military and border issues, while the ISF is primarily responsible for internal security needs. However, the responsibilities for the two sometimes overlap.

[105] See, for example: Casey L. Addis, *U.S. Security Assistance to Lebanon*, R40485 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 19, 2011).

[106] Since 2006, the following initiatives have received funding to implement programs in Lebanon: Economic Support Fund (ESF, State Department); Foreign Military Financing (FMF, State Department); International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Assistance (INCLE, State Department); International Military and Education Training (IMET, State Department); Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR, State Department); Global Train and Equip Program (through Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2006, Department of Defense); and Security and Stabilization Assistance program (through Section 1207 of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2007, Department of Defense). For more information, see: Rebecca A. Hopkins, *Lebanon and the Uprising in Syria: Issues for Congress*, R42339 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, February 2, 2012), 14.

[107] However, it should be noted that aid has decreased. In 2009, $299.32 million was allocated for U.S. security assistance to Lebanon. That number decreased to $187.38 million in 2011. The FY2012 request is $232.30 million. Hopkins, 14.

Presently, because neither the commander of the LAF nor the Defense Minister is a Hizbullah member, funding may continue.[108]

While these programs have realized measured success, they have largely failed to marginalize Hizbullah's influence and authority. One analyst notes that, "while the U.S. government has taken measures to support the Lebanese state, it has not simultaneously taken direct action to limit the influence of Hezbollah in Lebanon and in the region, to stop the flow of weapons to Hezbollah, or to disarm its military wing."[109]

Some reasons for the limited success of U.S. policy initiatives include: Hizbullah's continued role in the Lebanese government; U.S. refusal to separately recognize that Hizbullah's political and military components; and the legitimacy that Hizbullah maintains within Lebanon. Drawing on Nasrallah's rhetoric from the 2006 war, it is likely that Nasrallah's use of rhetoric to brand and market Hizbullah limits the success of these U.S.-sponsored programs. For example, the way in which Nasrallah parlays Hizbullah's abilities, as well as his anti-U.S. rhetoric, likely engenders and reinforces suspicions about U.S. objectives in Lebanon. His own legitimacy and credibility lend further credence to these thoughts. The U.S. is losing the war of ideas in Lebanon, in part because of Nasrallah's rhetoric and authority.

In addition, the reality of Hizbullah's strength simultaneously limits the success of U.S. initiatives and reinforces Nasrallah's rhetoric. Hizbullah is better armed and organized than both the LAF and the ISF; the group's strategic and tactical maneuvers during the 2006 war indicated the group's military sophistication. Additionally, Hizbullah counts some LAF and ISF officers as supporters, effectively limiting the influence of the American-supported programs. In short, Hizbullah may be more effective than each organization. Thus, while the additional funding may help improve some aspects of

[108] Hopkins, 16.
[109] Addis and Blanchard, 3.

Lebanese society, it is unlikely to combat the credibility that Hizbullah has built among its audiences, particularly in the short term.

Yet Nasrallah's rhetoric indicates the areas of interest and priority within Lebanese society. While the United States is unlikely to be able to counter the "divine inspiration" narrative, it has the ability to strategically target Nasrallah's remaining four priorities and challenge his claims to legitimacy.

U.S. emphasis on the helping the LAF and the ISF is predicated on strengthening the two forces and providing a counterweight to Hizbullah's military sophistication. It is unlikely that the United States will be able to detract significantly from Hizbullah's military capabilities. However, it can refocus its priorities vis-à-vis the LAF and the ISF and provide greater and more in-depth training. Additionally, the United States should consider funding initiatives that could provide social services and challenge Hizbullah's extensive network.

Present geopolitical trends have, in some ways, made Nasrallah's rhetoric self-limiting. Nasrallah's continued support for Asad in the face of the Syrian uprising discredits Nasrallah's "us versus them" narrative, weakens the claim that Hizbullah is the preeminent defender of Lebanon, and detracts from the importance placed on solidarity. While regime change in Syria will likely shift Hizbullah's priorities and identity, the United States could use its public diplomacy initiatives and support for the March 14 coalition to further exploit Nasrallah's weaknesses in these areas.

CONCLUSION

By better understanding the way in which Nasrallah communicates to his audiences and legitimizes himself, both researchers and policy makers may get a better sense of the way in which Hizbullah operates and sustains itself. Nasrallah's speech patterns provide insight into his leadership style, the targeted messaging that he uses, and the ways in which he prioritizes and presents Hizbullah's current and future goals. One of

the present weaknesses of the policy community is the poor comprehension of Hizbullah as an organization; Israel's conduct in the 2006 war evidences the grave repercussions that resulted from this lack of understanding. Although current regional politics, and particularly the uprising in Syria, have complicated Hizbullah's status in the Middle East, the group will likely influence both Lebanese and regional politics for the foreseeable future. Nasrallah will continue to be a key player. Thus, more attention and better analysis of Hizbullah and its leadership is integral if the United Stats is going to develop smart and well-founded policies towards the Middle East. Placing an emphasis on understanding communications, messaging, and rhetoric can only improve this analysis.

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